

HIGH SIERRA USERS GROUP

JOURNAL

ATARI

OCT. 1987
RENO, NEV

BOARD OF DIRECTORS...

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ITALO GAVAZZI (EDITOR).....Tel. 329-9946

MEETINGS...

LOCATION & DATE: General meeting and ST Special Interest
Group--Truckee Meadows Community College--Room 407; SAT.
T. 17--10 A.M. ST SIG--WED. OCT. 21--Round Table
Pizza, Old Town Mall--7:00 pm

ANNUAL DUES...

ANNUAL DUES are \$15.00. If you see a warning dot or
notice on your label, please renew your membership by
sending your dues to: HISUG; P. O. BOX 2152; SPARKS, NV.
89432. High Sierra Users Group is an independent
organization for Atari Computer users in the Reno area.

NOTE: If you want to see this group continue, to develop
its fine program library and to publish this
newsletter...THEN PAY YOUR DUES PROMPTLY...Don't take
these services for granted. Your dues are our only source
of income, and we can't continue without them. SEND YOUR
DUES IN NOW!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

TO: HISUG; P.O. BOX 2152; SPARKS, NV. 89432

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY-STATE-ZIP.....

TELEPHONE

ARTICLES FOR THE JOURNAL...

Articles for the JOURNAL are always welcome. If you wish
to submit them in printed form, please set your printer
for a 3-1/2 inch wide column in condensed type face.
However, as long as your copy is legible, even
handwritten copy is O.K. Articles will be printed as
space permits, and according to the editor's judgment of
suitability. Letters to the Editor are also welcome.
Please send material to: Italo Gavazzi; 825 Wilkinson
Ave.; Reno NV 89502 by the tenth of the month for
publication during that month.

BULLETIN BOARDS...

As a service to our members, we will be printing a list
of bulletin boards as a standard feature in every issue
of the Journal. This has been requested. The following
list may or may not be up-to-date. If any of these need
to be changed, please let me know.

FOR ATARI ST COMPUTERS:

.. 520 ST SYSTEM--363-8111--24 Hrs.--Located in Las Vegas
.. REBEL--453-0786--24 Hrs.
.. COMPUTER WORLD--735-7264--24 Hrs.
.. FALLOUT SHELTER--826-9633--24 Hrs.
.. COLOSSUS--827-5857--5 pm to 8 am
.. BENTLY'S CRYSTAL CASTLE--882-6248--24 Hrs.--1200 Baud
Only
.. COLUMBIA BBS--882-8325--10 pm to 6 am
.. THE RENO CONNECTION (TRC)--972-4682--24 Hrs.--300,
1200, 2400 Baud

FOR ATARI 8-BIT COMPUTERS

.. SIERRA EXPRESS--356-1418--24 Hrs.
.. LAIDBACK BBS--786-9518--6 pm to 8 am
.. SPEEDWAY BBS--577-2088--10 pm to 6 am
.. R.A.S.S.--322-8866--24 Hrs.
.. MAGIC MANSION--322-9338--24 Hrs.
.. BEACH HOUSE--358-9554--24 Hrs.

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.. ICE FACTORY--786-5596--24 Hrs.--300 Baud Only
 .. FALLOUT SHELTER--826-9633--24 Hrs.
 .. COLOSSUS--827-5857--5 pm to 8 am--300 Baud Only
 .. T.O.T.L. BBS--852-6018--24 Hrs.
 .. S.N.A.C.C. #2--876-8062--24 Hrs.
 .. BENTLY'S CRYSTAL CASTLE--882-6428--24 Hrs.--1200 Baud Only
 .. COLUMBIA BBS--882-8325--10 pm to 6 am
 .. THE DUDE--885-0312--24 Hrs.
 .. KONG'S PLACE--885-8090--24 Hrs.--300 Baud Only
 .. RENO CONNECTION (TRC)--972-4682--24 Hrs.--300, 1200, 2400 Baud
 .. SUN VALLEY BBS--972-6691--24 Hrs.--300 Baud Only

All the Bulletin Boards above accept both 300 and 1200 Baud, except as noted. The editor is relying on you modem users out there to report any needed corrections to this list.

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

YOUR EDITOR HAS BEEN EDITING THE JOURNAL SINCE JANUARY OF THIS YEAR. AFTER DECEMBER, HE WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO CONTINUE AS YOUR EDITOR. ANYONE WHO WANTS TO TAKE OVER THIS JOB OR TO HELP WITH IT, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH ME AT 329-9946 OR WRITE: ITALO GAVAZZI; 825 WILKINSON AVE; RENO, NV.

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS...

There seems to be somewhat a scarcity of new software other than games for the eight-bit Atari's. My own interests do not include games--but lie in the direction of applications and graphics.

Since I've made my own views abundantly clear in past columns regarding the folly of buying ever newer computers, I won't belabor that point any further.

The continual desire for new software itself constitutes a folly of another sort. The collection of software just for the sake of collection seems to be the fever that drives many a pirate bulletin board. But software without documentation is very often nearly worthless. I must confess that much of the software (documented) which I own hasn't really been properly exploited. Early in my first months with Atari, I acquired Microsoft Basic II. This has much more capability than Atari Basic. Excepting for converting some astronomical programs to utilize its more accurate math, I haven't used it. Atari Chess--never played. RamBrandt--this has been used, but I haven't tried many of its capabilities. SynCalc--used only enough to get a scraping acquaintance. There are others--all good, viable programs.

So I would recommend to you other eight-bit owners out

there to quit griping about the lack of new software. Dust off that software which you've never really used, and really learn to do something with it. This is really a great opportunity to re-examine what you're doing with your computer hobby. We all delude ourselves in all our hobbies--not only computers--that if we only could buy that great new piece of equipment or great new program, then we could really do great things. NOT SO. The best photographer I know owned one camera for years, limited himself to black and white photography and really did great stuff with that equipment. Then he purchased a larger camera and a couple of lenses for it. But he's still doing only black and white photography. However, he really works at it--and turns out superlative photos. He's kept his equipment simple and he's really learned how to use it--instead of following the usual path of the amateur by constantly gathering equipment rather than knowledge.

There's really no need to bemoan the lack of new equipment and software. Be happy that you don't have to concern yourself with such distractions, and really learn more about using your present hardware and software.

My editorship has only two more months to run. Then it's ADIOS. Kenn Johnson is doing a fine job with the ST SIG portion of the Journal, ably abetted by Cris Manson and Syd Allen. However, we need some help with the Eight-bit section, and we need someone to do the actual production of the Journal. Speaking of learning more about your computer and putting it to good use, here's your chance to try your hand at "Desktop Publishing".



ATARI 800XL

8 BIT NEWS

Along the lines of what I was saying in the editor's column about better use of existing software, I'm reprinting the following item from the Puget Sound Atari News by Wally Wong. The article has some pertinent comments about MAC/65, one of the better eight-bit programs.

MAC/65 NO MORE!--How the mighty do die! According to Bill Wilkinson, of OSS (Optimized Systems Software, Inc.) and creator of ADOS (DOS for the new 8-bit drives), as of August 1st, 1987, OSS will no longer be producing the MAC/65! What MAC/65's are left is what's on the dealer shelves and their suppliers' warehouses. Sad, Sad, Sad. For those unfamiliar with the product, MAC/65 is, without a doubt, the BEST macro assembler and editor program for the Atari 8-bit systems. Others may be easier to use or provide other features, but none are as complete and as powerful as the MAC/65. You'd find one of these

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cartridges near any serious Atari programmer's computer. This may be a sorry indication of the future of the 8-bits. Sagging sales of such an excellent product means the interest in software development has declined. Yes, we have ACTION! and other excellent software development products but still, no matter what language you do use, machine language routines are needed to add the necessary punch and power to your programs. The MAC/65 fits this bill. I suggest if you have any inclination toward software development or even if to dabble with assembly language, MAC/65 is something worth getting your hands on. I also suggest you hurry; no doubt, the prices on the MAC/65 will probably start to climb; this is going to become a collector's item!

Also from Wally Wong's column in the Puget Sound Atari News is the following short item, which also appears pertinent at this time:

Update on the XF-551 Disk Drive--Bill Wilkinson, of OSS, is writing ADOS, the new Disk Operating System for the new, double-sided double-density, 5-1/4", up to three times the speed of the 1050, soon to be shipped, soon to be on the dealers' shelves XF-551 disk drive. The new drive WILL be 100% compatible with SpartaDos! A patch by ICD will enable the 'ultraspeed' read/write on the new drive. It will have a suggested list price of \$199.00 and probably will be discounted to around \$169.00.

TOUGH TALK...

The following article by David Cox of the Atari Computer Owners of Rochester, N. Y. (ACORN) appeared in the September 1987 issue of the "ACORN Kernel". It presents a very pessimistic view of Atari's future, with which we don't necessarily agree. But it does discuss some hard issues, and it is thought-provoking and controversial. If it stirs you up enough to counter with a rebuttal, let's hear from you. With some editing to shorten its length, here it is:

The Rise and Fall of Atari--A few years ago when it looked as though Atari would be no more, Jack Tramiel bought the company and has since breathed new life to this remote outpost of the computer industry. The company has gone public and Atari's stock has soared. Despite apparent success, I fear that Atari will begin to fail during the next year.

My fears are based on a number of trends. The first is promising new products and not delivering...the PC emulator to attach to the ST...the PC clone...the 1200 baud modem...the 80-column card for the 8-bits...the CD-ROM...the laser printer...the Mega ST...the blitter chip.

The second trend is lack of support for the computers. Witness the complete lack of generally available

documentation on the ST computers and the complete absence of documentation for the 8-bit computers. The only documentation from Atari is part of a \$300 "developers" package. Contrast this situation with Apple, IBM and Commodore. All three of these companies sell polished technical manuals on their products at a fraction of the cost of the Atari developers kit. This documentation has been the catalyst for third party vendors to create and sell additional books ranging from introductory material to specialized manuals on various aspects of the computers. By providing documentation, Atari would demonstrate its seriousness about supporting its products...

The third trend is poor design of the computers. Time has demonstrated that good computer hardware design allows for expansion of the original equipment. Witness the original Apple II computers, the IBM PC's and compatibles, the new Macintoshes. These computers have been true sales successes. In large measure, the success has come from users being able to transform their computers into something more than the original without having to buy a whole new system. The result has been a real cost savings to users...

The fourth trend is a lack of hard disk drives. For other computers, hard disk drives can be had for under \$300, and dozens of brands are available. For the Atari, two or three brands can be found and cost close to \$700. These days a computer is not a computer if it has no hard disk drive...

The fifth trend is lack of quality. When first shipped, many Atari ST computers had loose chips that had to be reseated before the machines would work properly...Two years after this problem appeared, Atari ST computers still experience problems with loose chips...Other problems have been loose monitor cables...Another problem has been with hard disk drives--when the number of subdirectories goes beyond a certain point, already existing files on the drive can be lost...these problems existed two years ago and persist today.

The sixth trend is price. The ST computers were to sell primarily because they cost so much less than any other comparable computer. Two years after the ST's introduction, IBM PC's and compatibles now sell in the ST's price range. Some compatibles complete with 512K of memory, monitor, 20-30 MEG hard drive cost around \$1300...nearly identical to a comparable ST...Additionally, PC compatible users can benefit from the wealth of documentation and software available for the PC's.

Do you agree or disagree with the opinions expressed in the above article by David Cox? Do you think his gripes are legitimate, or are they are exaggerated? Let's hear from you.

ST SIG

Chairman: Kenn Johnson 673-1690
 Librarian: Maynard Smith 916-583-4332

HISUG NEWS

Our first evening meeting passed into history with mixed success. We discussed everything from the future of the group to the format for running the meetings.

Larry Elliot (Computer House) and Rod Coleman (Cimarron Computer) both expressed their concern that the group continue. They feel that the user group is an aid to owners with news, help, and unbiased software/hardware reviews.

It was decided to continue with the evening meetings but a different place would be conducive to a better meeting. The new meeting place is listed below. With everything else that was decided, we can only wait to see if the great experiment will bring more participants.

HISUG MEETINGS

Saturday October 17

10:00 AM Truckee Meadows Community College Room 407.

Wednesday October 21

6:30 PM Pizza and Setup Round Table Pizza Old Town Mall
 7:00 PM Meeting

At the Wednesday meeting Greg Crapo will have a demonstration of PRINT MASTER, a graphics program by Unison World.

Several members have expressed problems with a 1ST WORD print driver for the Panasonic 1090i. If anybody has one that works, bring it to a meeting or drop it by one of the dealers.

I am in the process of moving so my phone number is obsolete, but possibly the Bell System will give out my new number. When I have a place to set up my system again I'll update the newsletter.

CLOGGED DOT-MATRIX HEADS

syd Allen

Re-inking means darker ribbons but more clogging because of detritus picked up, to the point where a pin may not retract. This is what seems to catch and tear ribbons, not holes already there; a free pin retracts too fast to catch in anything. So, there is need, with many printers, to unscrew the head every few months, and clean it in denatured alcohol. But don't get alcohol beyond the block where the pins come out unless the manual says ok.

Before removing the head, take out the ribbon and place a shim of a thickness that can be made snug between platen and head by moving your paper-thickness-adjustment-lever. Write down where the lever ends up, so upon putting back the head you can reverse your procedure exactly and bring it to the correct distance from the platen again.

Toshiba uses a .010" (1/100 inch) shim with the head at closest setting. That makes sense: 20wt tractor paper = .004 (.0039), ribbon = .004, leaving .002 leeway for ribbon movement (all measured on my Mitutoyo Combimike). If you cannot find a single shim gauge at the auto store, send SASE to me and I'll send you a .010 brass one: Syd Allen, PO Box 1385, Westwood, CA 96137.

CRIS' CORNER

Cris Manson

I really did it this time...the new IBM emulator was too much to resist and just when I vowed not to spend another dime on my ST system for at least 6 months! PC DITTO comes along and WOW's my socks off. (This is the much touted program that is designed to allow your ST to run IBM programs). Now, mind you, I'm in the very beginning stages of deciding whether it's worth my hard earned money or not. So, let's continue for a moment and determine if it will be a welcome addition to your ST library or doomed to the 'SHELF'. (shiver)

The most sensible application I can think of would be if you already used an IBM (or compatible) at work and are tempted to turn yourself into an 'electronic cottage' by taking your mountains of work home to complete. Having purchased your ST more than a year ago, PC-DITTO would seem to really justify ATARI's name around the house to your doubting spouse.

Of course, you will note that I said 'sensible'. Yes, it will run all that it says it will (the list resting on the PC-DITTO disk itself). But what about the other 20,000 programs that are out there for the IBM? Well, I've tried a couple off the wall ones and yep, it ran those too. My biggest hurdle has been working with one single-sided 3.5" drive. I guess you could call it a 20 foot wall instead of a hurdle, because I never got over it! To reduce my threats of suicide, I received a 5 1/4" drive from hubby! Well life is a whole lot easier now, and I have been running a variety of neat stuff from PC-SIG disks, Project: Space Station (HES), PC-Write, Word Perfect and Newsroom (Springboard's desktop publisher). Ask me if I'm happy-go on, ask me!

A couple of notations here. One is that if you want to run a program that uses graphics, it will run very slow. So far, for me, that hasn't been a real big deal, but it may be for you, so weigh it carefully. Also, if you are a single density, single drive owner, don't even consider it until you can finagle a double sided 3.5" or, the simplest way, a 5 1/4" (and use the single for a data drive), it just wasn't meant to be otherwise.

I could do this like a real newspaper or magazine, you've seen the routine. It goes something like this....

Your
 Article
 Could
 Have
 Been
 Here!

But I won't do that. I will apologize if the newsletter looks hurried, because I can assure you it was. Five minutes after I am done here my system will be in boxes awaiting it's new ultra modern bench. I hope to be set up again in time to get next months articles out on time. Thanks Cris and Syd for your support.

ST SIG

ST RAMBLING

Kenn Johnson

It's official now, Atari has bought Federated Electronics Stores. This gives them the retail outlet for the ST system they have been craving. One of the interesting aspects of the purchase is FES has a deal to sell the AMIGA 2000 system. Think about it, JT could cancel the deal or sell the systems and make money from a competitor. Which would you do?

Here are some quotes dealing with the purchase. "I expect that this will boost our distribution on 520ST, 8-bit, and game systems." Neil Harris "Owning Federated will also give Atari an outlet for new electronics products--not computers--that the company plans to introduce next year, Mr Tramiel said, declining to describe the products." NY Times

Would anybody like to guess what other 'electronic products' Atari is thinking about? Maybe next Xmas I'll be putting my daughter to bed with a story telling Jack Tramiel teddy. "Once upon a time in Commodore land there....."

Atari has released several previously announced products including the SX212 modem, the 65XE game system, and the XEP80 adapter board. The vapor is solidifying...

The SX212 modem is Hayes compatible and works with the ST or 8 bit computers. The software to use it with the SIO port on the 8 bit has not been released but 'real soon now'. It can be used through a 850 interface or something compatible. Suggested list price is \$99.95. 80 column text on an 8 bit is possible with the XEP80 80 column interface board. Again the software to use it is not released. These include AtariWriter 80 and Silent Butler. List price is \$79.95. For a mere \$149.95 you can have the XE Game System which comes with a keyboard, a light gun, and three games (Flight Simulator II, Missile Command, and Bug Hunt).

There has been a rash of new software releases in preparation for the upcoming season. I've seen a list of over 30 new programs releasing in the next few weeks. Notables include F15 Strike Eagle, Word Perfect, Print Shop, Ultima 4, WordUp, and Marble Madness.

TIP -- Are you tired of searching for a program in a cluttered directory? Put it at the top by renaming it with a : as it's first character and have your options set to sort by name. You can use any legal ASCII character and they will be sorted in order. 0 comes before : but personally :PRG is easier to find than 0PRG. A note of caution here, do not rename programs or files a program may call by name. An example would be 1ST_PRNT.PRG. Renaming this will prevent 1ST_WORD.PRG from finding it when needed to print. Do not use any of these either: * ? \ as they are wildcards used for directory searches.

What was the hottest selling software for the summer? PC DITTO is relatively new but has been on the hot list since. Publishing Partner, Wordwriter, and Data Manager also sell well while FLASH is still a best seller.

Time Bandits and Major Motion are still selling but showing their age. A flashy newcomer is Barbarian, both dealers have trouble keeping it in stock. Chess Master 2000 is very popular and FLIGHT SIMULATOR II continues its popularity.

No real surprises here but I predict big changes as loads of new software is releasing or scheduled to release in the next few weeks. I pick F15 Strike Eagle as a sure fire hit and I am hoping WORD PERFECT makes it despite its price. A major software package success would finally legitimize our favorite computer.

Those of you that receive STart magazine may have noticed an ad by NEOTRON for their new word processing system. Called WORDUP, if it can do everything the ad claims, it could put a real damper on other new wordprocessors. WORDUP is to retail for \$79.95 versus \$395 for WORD PERFECT and \$149.95 for MS

WRITE. Dealers are supposed to have a demo copy by the time you read this. If it checks out, I may just have to get a copy. I'm one of the many still waiting for a class word processor.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Kenn Johnson

Because I spend so much time at my computer, I have the need for certain items to make my time more productive. One of these I have already discussed is DCOPY which speeds up ARC\DEARC time by a tremendous amount. I also have the need for a printer buffer and a way to set my printer configuration. A way to format a disk without having to drop out of a program is also handy when making library disks.

Fortunately the public domain has these available in several forms and so I can spend my allowance on other goodies. I have yet to find one program that will do everything I need, but it is easy to live with the accessories that I have.

Xutilities is an accessory that has many useful functions. Among them is the ability to format in standard or extended forms. It also allows you to configure your printer output for the size of margins, lines per page, number of lines to skip the perforation, what size pitch, etc. Other options available are keyboard configuration, repair disk, and copy disk. I have not used any of these as I have no reason to change the layout of my keyboard, I don't have any bad disks, and I use PROCOPY to do all my disk copying.

A funny thing about this review, I had not noticed any bugs until I called it up to look at the menu while in Publishing Partner. CRASH!!!! It doesn't seem to happen in other programs I've run with it so I suspect the two of them are fighting for the same memory space. Publishing Partner is very memory hungry. Knowing it now did not save the two hours of previous work.

The other accessory I use is courtesy of the newspaper ST INFORMER. It is a combination ramdisk/print spooler called SI RAMDISK. It is configurable to any size ramdisk, spooler, or combination of, that leaves at least 128K of memory for system use. It also has an auto load feature that will put your programs into the ramdisk on boot. Having a hard drive, I have no use for the ramdisk but I have tested it and it works. The print spooler or ramdisk can be installed at boot or while in the desktop.

The spooler allows me to send output to my printer and gives me back the computer in a few seconds. The printing goes on in the background. A true time saver!

Both SI RAMDISK and XUTILITIES have a save configuration function that sets the options you selected at boot. Both also have a memory available window though they never agree.

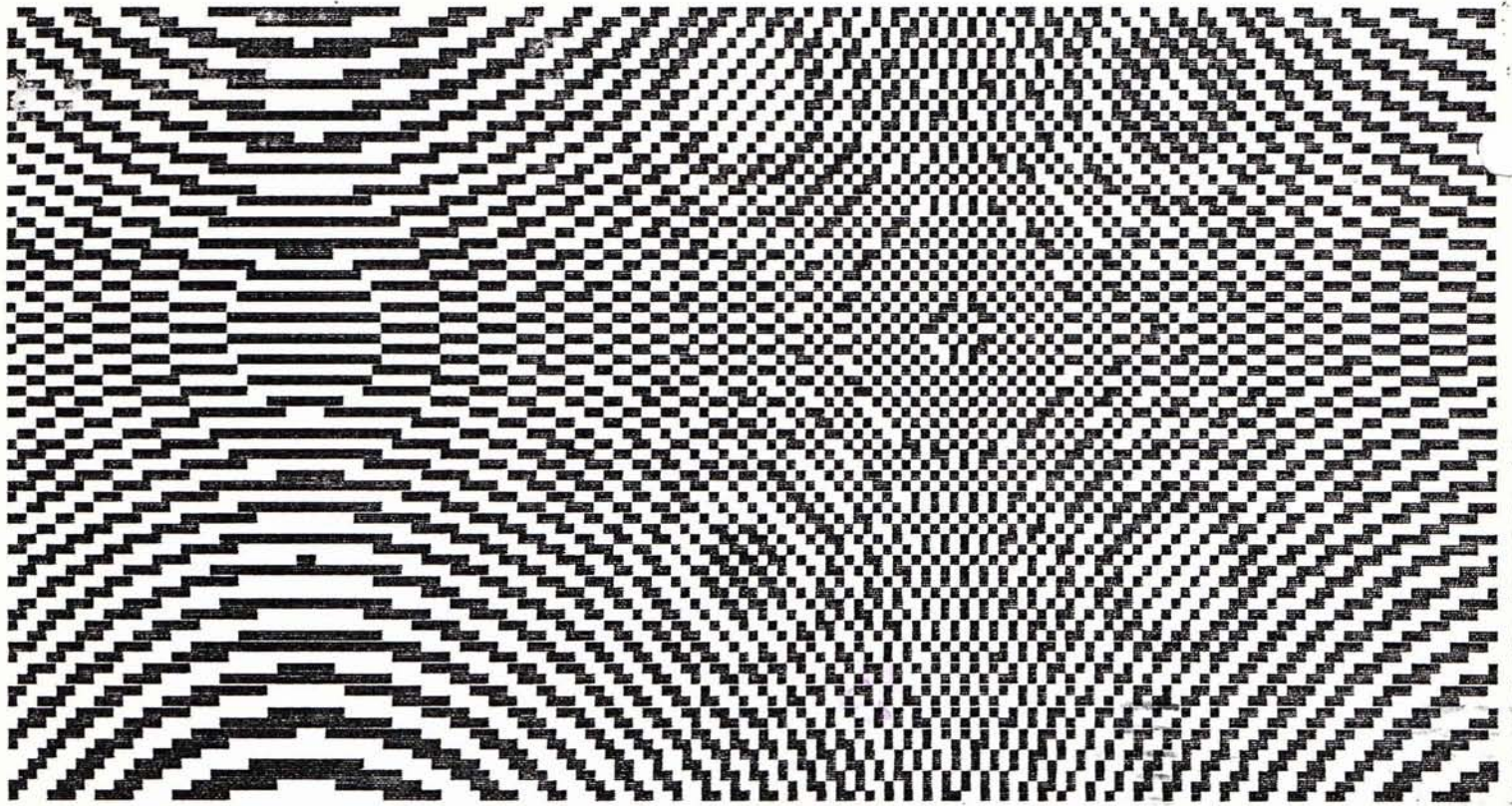
SI RAMDISK comes with a doc file but not XUTILITIES. Both are pretty straight forward, but it never hurts to read the docs. If you do have any problems with them give me a call.

Two very nice accessories that are available from our library. Try them out.


DUAL FLYING

Cris Manson

We are fortunate to have two ST's in the house and along with that, several family members interested in flying. As a result, Flight Simulator II by SUBLOGIC is a very frequently used program. The boys decided to try the dual mode. They made an RS232 cable up (costing about \$4.00 with parts from Computer House), hooked each end into the respective ST's and WALAH!! They could see each other when flying and on the ground in all modes! I heard 'RAD!' 'Trick!' and 'This is HOT!' all afternoon. After hours in the air, the only complaint that issued from the computer room was that in the WWII mode, they were not able to shoot at each other, typical of teenagers. However, if gossip from the grapevine holds true (is that possible?), SUBLOGIC will be releasing JET for the ST in which you are supposed to be able to do just that. They're crossing their fingers.



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